

September 22, 1959

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S and Mr. Murphy

FROM: EUR - Mr. White

SUBJECT: High Altitude Flights in the Berlin Corridors

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have concluded in their study of the resumption of high altitude flights in the Berlin corridors that the technical stipulations laid down by you at Geneva have been or can be met. They have determined that the flights can be conducted on a routine schedule, and can be justified on both economic and logistic grounds. They have recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek the President's approval to early resumption of the flights.

(Tab C)

In his letter to the President, Secretary McElroy points out that the paramount issue is still one of policy rather than economic desirability. He notes the possibility that Chairman Khrushchev, during discussions on Berlin, may refer to the matter or that the opportunity will arise when the President may wish to speak to the right of the Western Powers to fly to Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet.

In view of his conduct throughout the US tour thus far it appears highly unlikely that Khrushchev would raise this particular question himself or that he would be prepared to concede his position should the President introduce the subject. It is the Western position that we have the unrestricted right to fly at whatever altitude we choose in the Berlin corridors and that these flights would be purely routine. As a corollary, Soviet officials should presumably not be afforded an unnecessary opportunity to discuss the matter or to oppose our views.

On balance, it would appear preferable to avoid raising the issue at the Khrushchev level at this time. However, if in your judgment and that of the President, the conversations on Berlin take an unexpectedly favorable turn, it may nevertheless appear desirable to mention our intention to resume high altitude flights as a routine consequence of technological developments in the aviation field of which Khrushchev is aware through his own experience of flights in jet aircraft.

If the President decides in favor of resuming the flights they should probably not actually commence until after the British elections scheduled

for October 8

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for October 8 in order to avoid the danger of their becoming a campaign issue in Great Britain. If flights are resumed and it is decided that anything more than the routine notice to the Soviet controller in the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC) is desirable, notice should be given the Soviet Foreign Ministry by Embassy Moscow at the same time we inform the British, French and German Governments.

(Tab A)

Recommendation: That you sign the attached memorandum to the President forwarding Secretary McElroy's letter which recommends that should the opportunity arise the President discuss with Khrushchev Western rights to fly to Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet. The memorandum does not oppose resumption of flights at an appropriate time but recommends against raising the subject with Khrushchev unless the Camp David talks take an unexpectedly favorable turn.

CLEARANCES

GPE - Mr. Lampson *EL*
GER - Mr. Vigderman *AGV*
GER - Mr. Hillenbrand *LM*
SOV - Mr. Davis *AD*
BNA - Mr. Swihart *SW*
WE - Mr. Brogan *EB*

s/s -

JFM
EUR:GER:GPA:JFM:Farland:jcg

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

Refer to I-15243/9

SEP 19 1959

My dear Mr. President:

During your discussions with Chairman Khrushchev on Berlin, it may be that he will refer to, or that the opportunity will arise when you may wish to speak to, the right of the Western Powers to fly to Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet. I am writing to advise you of the present position with respect to future flights.

As you will remember, we made two C-130 flights in April 1959 to Berlin at altitudes above 20,000 feet. Further flights were suspended temporarily because of the Geneva Conference. At the close of the Conference, the resumption of flights was discussed with the Secretary of State. Although opposed to occasional probing flights that might appear to the Soviet Union, as well as to certain of our allies, primarily to be provocative, he was agreeable, subject to your approval, to high altitude flights on a routine basis as part of our regular Berlin supply operation, provided that the flights could be explained reasonably on economic and logistic grounds.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff re-studied this question, advised that the flights are justified on economic and logistic grounds and recommended that the flights be resumed. I am enclosing their memorandum to me of August 19, 1959, with which, except as to timing, I agree.

Chairman Khrushchev should be familiar with the desirability of operating jet transports at high altitudes. He flew to the United States in a Tu-114 whose normal cruising altitude is between 25,000 feet and 35,000 feet. The Soviet Union has three other jet or turboprop transports, all of which cruise well above 25,000 feet.

However, of even greater importance in my view than the economic and logistic justification of the C-130 is that the United States uphold the principle of its right to fly to Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet. Even though a C-130 operates

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most efficiently at an altitude above 20,000 feet, it is perfectly possible to fly them less efficiently below 10,000 feet. The basic point for ultimate decision is one of policy rather than economic desirability.

I am sending this to you via the Secretary of State so that he may add such comments as he may wish.

Respectfully yours,

Signed
NEIL McELROY

The President

The White House

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

1584-338-53

19 Aug 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Resumption of C-130 Flights to Berlin Above 10,000 Feet (S)

1. In response to a memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of Defense requesting the views and recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with respect to the utilization of C-119 aircraft on rescue flights to Berlin at altitudes above 10,000 feet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended that, in light of the views of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of Defense, the use of C-119 aircraft in the rescue situation.

[illegible]

3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that regular high altitude flights of C-130 aircraft should be resumed in the air corridor to Berlin at the earliest possible time. These flights can be explained reasonably on the grounds of aircraft characteristics and operating economy. The schedule can be maintained on a routine and continuous basis. The use of the C-130 on the Berlin flights will not have any impact on other regular C-130 missions.

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4. It cannot be stated categorically that C-130's are necessary at this time for the supply of our forces in Berlin as other type aircraft are currently available to CINCSAFE. However, in the near future all transport squadrons available to CINCSAFE will be equipped with C-130 aircraft. Three of the six transport squadrons currently deployed in Europe are equipped with C-130 aircraft, one additional squadron will be converted during Fiscal Year 1961 and all six squadrons will be so equipped by the end of Fiscal Year 1962. Under these conditions there is a clear requirement to utilize C-130 aircraft in the routine resupply of our forces in Berlin at an early date.

5. Allied to this problem is an increased interest by civilian airlines in operating high altitude jet aircraft through the corridors. Recently, Air France expressed a desire to begin operation of the jet propelled Caravelle to Berlin, effective 1 November 1959. The French mission recommended the flights be made under 10,000 feet for political reasons, and Air France has now decided to use the Super-Constellation. However, should an airline inaugurate jet service into Berlin at or below 10,000 feet, our use to fly C-130's above 10,000 feet would be seriously weakened.

6. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the Secretary of State be informed and approval of the President be obtained for the resumption of the C-130 high altitude flights in the Berlin corridor. If approved, it is planned to commence the first flight during the week of 1 September 1959 and initially schedule one per week.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED

H. F. TUNNICLIFFE,
Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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GEP/Mr. Farland

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

September 21, 1959

FOR - Mr. Winship

High Altitude Flights

Attached is a letter of September 19 to the Secretary from Secretary of Defense McElroy enclosing a letter to the President on high altitude flights in Berlin. Please prepare urgently your recommendations to the Secretary on Mr. McElroy's proposal and have them in S/S by close of business on Tuesday, September 22.

(1)

Robert W. Duemling
S/S-RO
Ext. 5130

Attachment:

Letter dated September 19, 1959
from Secretary McElroy.

cc: S/P - Mr. Savage
G - Mr. Long
C - Mr. Kirk

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